

MEMORANDUM

The Soviets appear to have shown unusual sensitivity to a brief report published in the London Sunday Times on 31 August accusing Moscow of stepping up its subversive activities in northwestern Iran. The newspaper report alleged that the Soviets have infiltrated more than 7,000 Soviet Farsi-speaking Tadzhiks into Iranian Azarbayjan where they are "having considerable success indoctrinating the Iranians in the virtues of Communism."

Moscow denied this report, which may have been picked up in the Tehran press, in a broadcast in Persian into Iran and more recently in the Soviet Army newspaper. The Soviets asserted in the newspaper that such action would be impractical because Soviet Tadzhikistan does not border Iranian Azarbayjan and Tajik is not spoken in Iran. The newspaper characterized the Sunday Times story as "a clear political provocation" designed to distract attention from Western machinations against the Khomeini regime.

Moscow's sensitivity to Western criticism may be due to the current downturn in Soviet-Iranian relations. The Soviets may believe that these charges of subversion have, in part, contributed to their recent difficulties with Tehran.

We have seen no comments by Iranian officials concerning the allegations. The Soviets' vigorous denials of interference in Iran, however, give the reports further publicity which may heighten Iranian suspicions of the Soviets intentions toward Iran.

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Mintoff and Libya feud over oil rig

by Ivor Tilney, Valletta

MALTA'S nine-year friendly relationship with Libya broke apart last week, and an oil-rig in an area of the Mediterranean disputed by the two countries was the centre of the drama. A Libyan submarine commander threatened force against the rig, the Italian-owned Saipem II, which is drilling for the Maltese, and Italy ordered its navy to protect it.

The rig is at Medina bank, 68 miles south-east of Malta. The Maltese say this is 15 miles on their side of the median line governing prospecting rights, but the Libyians claim the line should be further north.

The Maltese prime minister, Dom Mintoff, angrily expelled all Libyan military personnel and accused Libya of being a danger to peace in the Mediterranean. "My government," he said, "will never surrender its rights to someone who is better armed and acting as a bully." Mintoff followed up this statement by removing diplomatic immunity from all but four of the 19 officials at the Libyan Popular Office, formerly known as the embassy.

Mintoff's government, however, is now in a delicate position, aggravated by domestic problems and the prospect of elections next year. Observers consider that if relations with Libya became still worse, that would seriously harm Mintoff's self-appointed role of peace-maker in the Mediterranean as well as leaving neutral Malta defenceless now that all agreements with Libya have been scrapped.

Most Maltese have disliked the Libyan influence and feel the present conflict could improve the prospects of Malta re-entering the European fold. Mintoff had long talks last week with the Italian deputy foreign minister, Giuseppe Zamberletti, reportedly covering economic aid and defence. Italy, West Germany and France have also offered to help Malta with its acute water shortage.

Even the Soviet Union is cashing in on the Mintoff-Gaddafi split-up. A Russian diplomat, Vladimir Suslov, has just rounded off a five-day visit.

EARLY WARNING

Soviet war of words in Iran

IT WILL NOT be long now, say well-informed Iranian exiles, before Ayatollah Khomeini's regime starts to feel the impact of Soviet subversion attempts of the last few months. Moscow has sent more than 7,000 Tadjiks from Soviet Tadjikistan across the border into Azarbaijan in north-west Iran. The Tadjiks are fluent in Farsi and are having considerable success indoctrinating the Iranians of Tabriz and even parts of Mazandaran, north of Teheran, in the virtues of communism. At clandestine schools they promise to reopen cinemas and abolish enforced wearing of the veil by women. For many Iranians already stifled by the rule of the mullahs, it is heady stuff.

Boycott bonus

INDIAN officials are pointing to the likelihood of great benefits from the western boycott of Iran.

Iran has asked Indian companies to take up projects left unfinished by departed foreigners. The first is a 60,000 tonne steel alloy plant which was to have been built by a French company. Iran is also beginning to recycle some of its oil revenues through Indian banks.

Wall of death

THE new trend in border security along the Berlin Wall is to replace minefields with automatic shooting devices. There are now 42,000 of these lethal gadgets along a stretch of 250 miles, while mined areas have been reduced from 370 to 175 miles. The East Germans' action breaks the 1970 Hague Convention which prohibits weapons that cause "unnecessary suffering and irreparable wounds" (the devices use dum-dum bullets).

Immigration fear

BERMUDA, Britain's tiny Atlantic colony, is in a lather over the UK government's three-tier citizenship proposal on the ground that the island could be swamped with new immigrants. John Swan, Bermuda's home affairs minister, complains the proposal would provide un-

restricted right of entry for anyone claiming a close connection with the island — including people born there, those who had been naturalised or registered there as a citizen of the UK and colonies and people who had at any time married persons qualified for British dependent territory citizenship. "These proposals are unfair," said Swan, who will lead a delegation to London if they are not changed.

Peace prize row

A MORE or less happy eightieth birthday approaches this week for Finland's President Kekkonen, Europe's oldest political leader, who consolidated Finland's unique brand of neutrality which includes good relations with the Soviet Union. But the Finns and the Russians cannot agree whether this ought to be the occasion for giving him the Lenin Peace Prize. According to the president's office, a visiting Soviet delegation "will not be bestowing the prize," but a Soviet source says: "Our people intend handing over the award." The Finns are embarrassed because two pre-



Kekkonen: embarrassed

vious Finnish winners of the Lenin prize were both arch-Stalinists from whom Kekkonen would prefer politely to distance himself.

Crying wolf

SOMALIA is causing headaches for the US State Department. The department was horrified last week by Somalia's allegation that strong Ethiopian forces had invaded the country's north-west — just a few days after the Americans agreed to take over the former Soviet naval base at Berbera in exchange for arms worth 45 million dollars. But there was no invasion — only a Somali ploy to get the Americans to speed up the arms flow.

Alain Keler

dissent opposition. the labour unrest, Polish journalist week that the old had broken down — had to be put in

ed: "Since the war, has been run by a different methods. had sheer Stalinist ter. the mobilisation of which was gradually under Gomulka. When to power in 1970, new formula — tech-consumerism. But it with autocracy, simply didn't work. must be controlled by democracy." painfully, Poland is that could be communist country. will go wrong. But it to the restraint of that, while the argu- been heard, so far shot has been fired.

SUBJECT: Iran: Soviet Sensitivity About Western Criticism

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